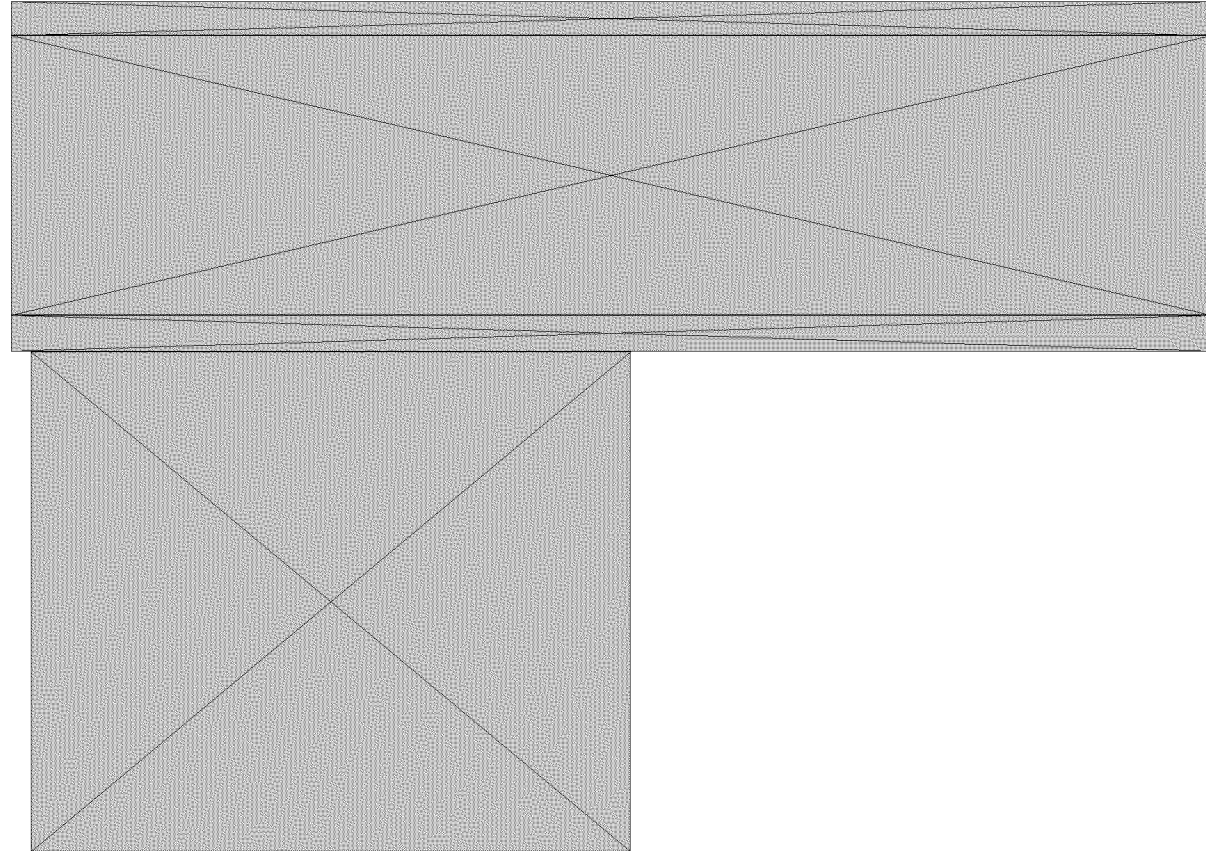


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Energy and environment headlines for the morning of Wednesday, August 19, 2015



## Clinton seeks distance from Obama on climate change issues

By Josh Lederman and Ken Thomas

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nevada (AP) — Hillary Rodham Clinton is opposing President Barack Obama's authorization for oil drilling in the Alaska Arctic and his delays on the Keystone XL pipeline, in some of the clearest signs of the Democratic front-runner distancing herself from the president.

Having agreed with him on most issues so far in her 2016 race, Clinton edged to Obama's left

on climate change on Tuesday. In the course of a few hours, she announced her disapproval of his move to allow Royal Dutch Shell to drill in the Arctic Ocean and her impatience for a decision on the Keystone XL pipeline Alberta in Canada to Texas.

Clinton remains the overwhelming favorite for the Democratic presidential nomination but growing enthusiasm for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders has been pushing her further to the left in recent weeks in an attempt to widen her appeal with the party's liberal base.

Sanders and other primary opponents are opposed to Keystone, Arctic drilling and other projects deemed risky for the environment.

Clinton argued on Twitter that the Arctic is a unique treasure and "not worth the risk of drilling." Then as she took questions from reporters later in Nevada, she said the U.S. should be focusing on cleaner sources of renewable energy, rather than risking "potential catastrophes" in the search for more oil.

"I think the very great difficulties that Shell encountered the last time they tried to do that should be a red flag for anybody," Clinton said, referring to a setback that beset the oil giant when it tried to drill there in 2012, including a rig that ran aground.

In the early months of her campaign, Clinton has rarely disagreed publicly with Obama, who remains popular among core Democratic voters but much less so among the broader American public. Her biggest rebuff came in June when she declined to support giving Obama expedited negotiating authority on trade. Even then, she characterized her position as more of a wait-and-see approach than outright opposition to the trade deals he's pursuing.

Clinton's comments on Arctic drilling came less than a day after the Obama administration, in a long-expected move, gave Shell the final permits needed to drill for oil off Alaska's northwest coast, drawing consternation from environmentalists.

Unsurprisingly, the same groups that had criticized Obama praised Clinton for stating her opposition. "We applaud Secretary Clinton for standing up for what science, the will of the American people and common sense demand," said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune.

Clinton's Republican opponents pushed back.

"Wrong," former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush responded on Twitter. "Being more-anti energy than Obama is extreme."

Clinton has said she won't take a stance on whether to approve the Keystone XL pipeline unless the decision is still pending if and when she's elected. Keystone supporters and opponents alike have questioned her refusal to say what she believes about an issue important to voters.

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## **Five bidders: Tiny Gulf of Mexico oil lease sale**

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## Five bidders: Tiny Gulf of Mexico oil lease sale

**By The Associated Press**

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Low oil prices contributed to the smallest oil lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico off of Texas since the federal government began regional sales in 1983.

Five companies bid a total of less than \$23 million on 33 tracts in the western Gulf on Wednesday. Each tract got a single bid, and BHP Billiton Petroleum (Deepwater) Inc. made 26 of the bids.

The smallest sale in that area before Wednesday was in 1986, when \$56.8 million was bid on 41 tracts.

BP Exploration and Production Inc. made a single bid. Ecopetrol America Inc. made one on its own and three together with Anadarko US Offshore Corp., and Peregrine OI7 Gas II LLC made two.

An offshore industries trade group said Tuesday that low oil prices were among factors likely to depress interest in the sale.

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## Last official charged in chemical spill pleads guilty

**By Jonathan Mattise**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — The executive who appeared unsympathetic when he spoke to the public after a chemical spill sullied tap water for 300,000 people pleaded guilty Wednesday to pollution charges and could face up to three years in prison.

Freedom Industries President Gary Southern, who told reporters a day after the January 2014 spill that he had had a "long day" and tried to leave a news conference multiple times, is the last of six company officials to plead guilty in the spill.

The spill happened when a corroded Freedom tank in Charleston leaked coal-cleaning chemicals into the water supply for nine counties, spurring a ban on tap water for up to 10 days.

Southern faces a minimum of 30 days in prison and a maximum of three years. He also faces a fine of up to \$300,000 and perhaps restitution.

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[Interior Department to lead review of Colorado river](#)

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By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Interior Department will lead a review of the Colorado mine spill that tainted rivers in three western states.

The review was announced late Tuesday after elected officials from both parties questioned whether the Environmental Protection Agency should be left to probe its own heavily criticized response to the disaster. EPA and contract workers accidentally unleashed 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater on Aug. 5 as they inspected the idled Gold King mine.

The Interior Department's report is expected to be released publicly in 60 days.

In addition, EPA's inspector general is conducting a separate review of the incident. Leaders of oversight committees in both the House and Senate say they are planning hearings after Congress returns from its August recess.

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## **Obama's Iran deal may well survive on Capitol Hill**

By Erica Werner and David Porter

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fiercely contested Iran nuclear deal will likely survive in Congress despite unified GOP opposition and some Democratic defections, the top Senate Republican says. That would mean a major foreign policy win for President Barack Obama.

Obama has "a great likelihood of success," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said in his home state of Kentucky this week — giving public voice to what other Republicans have acknowledged in private. "I hope we can defeat it, but the procedure is obviously stacked in the president's favor."

Indeed, even as Congress' August recess has hardened Republicans' opposition to the deal on Capitol Hill and on the presidential campaign trail, reality is setting in: They probably can't stop it. Significant Democratic defections from Obama would be required in both chambers of Congress, and even with opponents mounting a strenuous lobbying campaign in key congressional districts, such a prospect looks remote.

That means that even with Obama firmly in lame-duck territory and his GOP opponents in control of Congress and aiming for the White House, the president is on the verge of a legacy-defining victory on a pact that he and his supporters say will keep the world safe from Iran's nuclear ambitions. Opponents continue to warn furiously that the result could be just the opposite: to strengthen Tehran's hand, in an existential threat to Israel and the world.

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## **Ex-Massey coal chief wants testimony excluded from trial**

**By Pam Ramsey**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Former Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship's lawyers say his compensation and stock holdings and the testimony of a former subordinate are irrelevant to his criminal case and should be excluded from his trial.

Evidence of Blankenship's finances and testimony from David Hughart, a former president of Massey subsidiary White Buck Coal Co., would unfairly prejudice the jury, defense lawyers said in motions filed Tuesday in federal court.

Hughart was sentenced in 2013 to 3½ years in prison on conspiracy charges that grew out of the criminal investigation into the 2010 Upper Big Branch explosion, which killed 29 men. He admitted his role in ensuring that miners at other Massey subsidiaries got illegal advance warning of surprise safety inspections. He also implicated Blankenship in the conspiracy during his plea hearing in 2013.

"All of the testimony from Hughart that the government seeks to admit concerns mines other than UBB. The indictment specifically states that Mr. Blankenship is charged with conspiring to willfully violate mine-safety standards and impede MSHA 'at UBB,' not at any other mine," Blankenship's lawyers wrote in one motion.

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### **A message from the American Petroleum Institute**

**America is now the world's #1 natural gas producer and will soon be #1 in oil. Now more than ever, abundant energy means abundant prosperity, opportunity and security for all Americans.**

[Learn more at EnergyTomorrow.org](http://EnergyTomorrow.org)

## **Dog Days publishing schedule for EnergyGuardian**

**By EnergyGuardian**

The Dog Days of summer are upon us, and as is tradition during the weeks leading up to Labor Day, EnergyGuardian will publish a single midday edition each day from Aug. 17 through Aug. 28.

Of course, we'll cover any breaking news with alerts.

Although Labor Day is not until Sept. 7, we expect to resume a normal publishing schedule on Monday, Aug. 31. There will be no newsletter on Labor Day, Sept. 7.

We hope you have a chance to get away and enjoy some relaxation as summer winds down and thank you for your support all year long.

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## **Massive blazes across dry West drain firefighting resources**

**By Nicholas Geranios and Ted Warren**

CHELAN, Wash. (AP) — Wildfires are putting such a strain on the nation's firefighting resources that authorities have activated the military and sought international help to beat back scores of blazes burning uncontrolled throughout the dry West.

The situation is so urgent that the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise this week called in 200 active-duty military troops to help contain roughly 95 wildfires. It's the first time since 2006 that the agency has mobilized soldiers for fire-suppression.

"Nationally, the system is pretty tapped," said Rob Allen, the deputy incident commander for the fires around the Cascade Mountain resort town of Chelan. "Everything is being used right now, so competition for resources is fierce."

The troops are all coming from the 17th Field Artillery Brigade at Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma and will be sent to a fire north of Republic, a town in central Washington, about 30 miles south of the Canadian border.

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## **Obama to visit New Orleans for 10th anniversary of hurricane**

**By Darlene Superville**

EDGARTOWN, Mass. (AP) — President Barack Obama will visit New Orleans next week to mark the approaching 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

The powerful storm struck Louisiana on Aug. 29, 2005, causing significant damage to the Gulf Coast and forcing a storm surge that breached New Orleans' levee system and flooded large sections of the city. Nearly 2,000 people died because of the storm, most of them in New Orleans.

The White House says Obama plans to meet Aug. 27 with New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu and residents who have spent the past decade rebuilding their lives.

He will also deliver remarks on the region's rebirth.

Obama will be joined by Craig Fugate, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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## Atlantic Tropical Storm Danny strengthens; no threat to land

By The Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Tropical Storm Danny is strengthening over the Atlantic Ocean but remains well out to sea.

The storm is the Atlantic's fourth named storm of the season. On Tuesday night, the National Hurricane Center in Miami said it was located about 1,505 miles (2,420 kilometers) east of the Windward Islands. It had maximum sustained winds of 50 mph (85 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 14 mph (22 kph).

The storm currently poses no threat to land; there are no watches or warnings in effect. The hurricane center said some additional strengthening is forecast during the next two days, and Danny is expected to become a hurricane by Thursday.

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## **Week in Review – Ozone next on Obama's regulatory agenda**

Renewable Fuel Standard science questioned.

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## **US crude nears 6.5-year low on EIA stock data**

U.S. crude prices tumbled toward their lowest levels since March 2009 Wednesday as the Energy Information Administration announced an unexpected increase in oil stocks. West Texas Intermediate had dropped \$1.80, to \$40.82 a barrel, by midday, Reuters reports. Brent crude fell \$1.81 to \$47 a barrel.

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## **Menendez backs 'strategic exports' to counter Iran**

Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., who wants the nuclear deal with Iran rejected and sanctions continued, said the Obama administration should consider "strategic exports" of crude oil to U.S. allies hurting because of the embargo on Iranian oil, Platts reports.

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## **MSHA touts high compliance with mining coal dust rule**

The Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration announced Tuesday that 99 percent of the mining industry is complying with the year-old rule to limit miners' exposure to coal dust, The Hill reports.

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## **Vulnerable OPEC members face political trouble amid low prices**

The five most vulnerable members of OPEC—Iraq, Libya, Venezuela, Algeria and Nigeria—are facing increased risk of political turmoil, and even Saudi Arabia is hurting as oil prices hover near six-year lows, Bloomberg reports.

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## **Oklahoma tops 2014's earthquake record**

Less than nine months into 2015, Oklahoma has set a new record for earthquakes with a magnitude of 3 or greater: 586 have occurred in the state this year, beating last year's record, E&E reports.

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## **Methane reduction industry cheers EPA proposal**

The Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to slash methane emissions from oil and gas facilities drew praise from the methane mitigation industry, which says the rule will drive new investment in technology to monitor and secure emissions, Reuters reports.

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## **Carson targets EPA for mine spill**

Republican presidential hopeful Dr. Ben Carson criticized the Environmental Protection Agency for the accidental spill of mine waste into Colorado's Animas River, warning that the "long-term impact" of the incident remained unclear, The Durango Herald reports.

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## **California communities charge ahead with new housing despite drought**

Despite California's ongoing drought, communities across the state are forging ahead with new housing development plans, contending that there will be adequate water supplies to meet demand, The New York Times reports.

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## **Greens' analysis seeks end to federal fossil fuel development**

A [new analysis](#) backed by Friends of the Earth and the Center for Biological Diversity argues that eliminating fossil fuel development on federal lands would prevent as many as 450 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, The Hill reports.

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## **Venezuela may sell off gold to counter oil slump**

A report from Citigroup suggests that Venezuela, facing revenue shortfalls stemming from weak oil prices, may move to sell off some of its gold reserves to generate cash, Bloomberg reports.

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## **Report: Utilities warming to community solar programs**

A [study](#) from the University of Texas at Austin suggests that some utilities are looking to expand community solar programs to break into the business, finding it a more beneficial option than net metering from individual customers' rooftop arrays, The Washington Post reports.

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